REMARKS

Claims 1-26 remain pending in the application. The status of the claims is as follows: claims 1-6, 8-9, 11, 16-18 and 24-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by previously-cited Honda (U.S. 5,233,989). Claims 7, 13 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by newly-cited Ito (U.S. 5,291,403). Claim 10 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious over Honda in view of previously-cited Luo et al (U.S. 5,901,240). Claims 12, 15, and 19-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious over Honda. Claims 22-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious over Honda in view of Ito.

Honda relates to an X-ray imaging method and an X-ray imaging system for judging whether an X-ray contrast image of a biological body under medical examination can be acquired during X-ray imaging operation by checking temporal variations contained in averaged values of image concentration with respect to subdivided X-ray image regions.

Luo relates to a method for detecting the collimation field in a digital radiography to facilitate optimal tone scale enhancement, to minimize the viewing flare caused by the unexpected area, and to benefit image segmentation and body part identification.

Ito relates to a method for processing a radiation image in which frequency response processing can be selectively applied to only a pattern of desired tissue in a radiation image of an object having a plurality of tissues.

Claim 1 is amended herein to add the limitation of performing image outputting with the image output device of the one original image signal having been transferred, prior to the operation-processed image signal being obtained from the predetermined operation processing.

This limitation is not taught or suggested by Honda. Applicant argued this point in the Amendment filed March 22, 2004. In the "Response to Arguments," the Examiner responded to this argument only by stating that the above-recited limitation is not present in claim 1. The Examiner offered no rebuttal of the argument.

Claims 2, 3, 17, and 22-24 should at least be patentable due to their dependence from claim 1.

Claim 4 is amended in a similar manner to that for claim 1. Applicant submits that independent claim 4 and dependent claims 5, 6, 9-12, 16, 20, and 25 are not anticipated by Honda for reasons analogous to those stated for claim 1.

Also, claim 8 is amended in a comparable manner to the amendments of claims 1 and 4. Applicant submits that claim 8 is allowable for reasons analogous to those for claim 1.

As such, claims 15, 18, 22, and 26 should be patentable, given their dependence from claim 8.

Claims 7, 13 and 14 are canceled by the present Amendment, thereby rendering moot the rejection of these claims.

As for the obviousness rejection of claim 10, the Examiner incorporates the arguments from the rejection of claim 4 as part of the rejection. As described above, claim 4 is not anticipated by Honda, and claim 10 should be patentable due to its dependency from claim 4. Further, Luo does not make up for the deficiencies of Honda.

In regards to the rejection of claims 12, 15, and 19-21 due to obviousness, each of the claims should be patentable due to their dependence from independent claims 1, 4, and 8, respectively.

Additionally, claims 12 and 15 are not obvious in view of Honda. Claim 12 of the present invention recites that the image output device comprises a liquid crystal panel display device. Simply because a liquid crystal panel display device may be known to those in the art does not make it an obvious choice for use by practitioners of the art. The Examiner argues that it would have been obvious to use a liquid crystal display, because it saves space. However, the Examiner has not indicated any specific concern in Honda regarding the size of the display used.

Claims 19-21 recite performing image outputting with the image output device and in accordance with the one original image signal having been transferred is performed prior to the operation-processed image signal being obtained from the predetermined operation processing. The Examiner states that it would be obvious in light of Honda to show the original image first on the display unit. However, Honda recites using a switch to prevent the original image from being displayed on the display unit. Hence, claims 12, 15, and 19-21 should all be allowable.

Claims 22 and 23 should be allowable due to their dependence from claim 1. Additionally, there does not seem to be a motivation to combine the Ito and Honda references. The mere fact that references can be combined or modified does not render the resultant combination obvious unless the prior art also suggests the desirability of the combination. MPEP §2143.01. The prior art does not suggest this desirability. The Examiner concedes that Honda does not disclose adding an image signal obtained from an upper surface side of a stimulable phosphor sheet to an image signal obtained from a lower surface side of the stimulable phosphor sheet. The Examiner contends that Ito discloses a superposition image created during a subtraction process as shown in figure 2. However, claim 22 of the present

invention actually teaches an addition process, which Ito does not suggest. Therefore, claim 22 is not obvious over Honda in view of Ito.

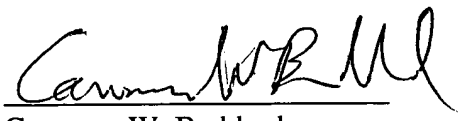
The Examiner states that claim 23 is obvious due to Ito disclosing the performance of a masking operation on each of the image signals obtained from the upper and lower surface sides of the stimulable phosphor sheets (the subtraction step 71 in figure 2). Claim 23 recites performing masking operations on the image signals obtained from the upper and lower surface sides of the stimulable phosphor sheet. This masking step is to occur before the addition of the two signals to create the superposition image. Therefore, claim 23 is not obvious over Honda in view of Ito, as Ito does not teach masking of the image signals prior to the initial subtraction; it only recites subtraction of one signal from the other.

Also, claim 23 is amended to correct its dependency from claim 22.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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